

Distyliums

Distylium hybrids are an exciting new arrival in the nursery trade. They are a Southern gardener's dream plant because they are evergreen, compact, disease and insect resistant, and are heat and drought tolerant. Distylium hybrids will also grow in wet soils. One clear advantage is that the plants require very little pruning. In addition to this, they produce a small reddish maroon flower from late January until March. The seed is a small brown capsule the same color as the stem and it is not invasive.



Distyliums have small reddish maroon flowers in the winter. Photo courtesy of Dr. Michael Dirr, Watkinsville, GA.

Distylium hybrids were developed by Dr. Michael Dirr, a retired University of Georgia horticulture professor, along with his plant professional partners, Jeff Beasley and Mark Griffin at Plant Introductions Inc. Currently, there are five available introductions that originate from the cross between two Isu-trees

Distylium racemosum and *D. myricoides*.

Distyliums are native to China and Japan. They are a member of the witch hazel family *Hamamelidaceae*, and a distant cousin to the common witch hazel, *Hamamelis virginiana*, which is native to the Eastern United States.

Due to their toughness, Distylium hybrids are an excellent alternative to laurels, junipers, hollies, Indian hawthorns, boxwoods, and in Dr. Dirr's words "other green meatballs".

Mature Height & Spread

Depending on the variety, the cascading growth habit ranges from three to ten feet in height and four to eight feet wide with alternate leaves that are a glossy dark green to blue green. Some of the varieties have coppery-red new foliage.

Cultivation

Light tip pruning in June spurs new growth and a denser growth habit. This is best done before the flower buds are set in late summer. A late winter tip pruning may also be done after the plant has bloomed, but the best advice is minimal attention. They will grow from light shade to full sun. When planted in shaded areas, Distyliums will have a looser shape.

Problems

There is no significant pest or disease damage to be noted. Furthermore, the plants have a high resistance to deer and rabbits munching on them.

Cultivars & Varieties

There are five varieties available:



'Vintage Jade' planted in a foundation design.

Photo courtesy of Dr. Michael Dirr, Watkinsville, GA

1. *Distylium 'Vintage Jade' (PP23, 128, First Editions®)* is the smallest variety, with a compact, mounding growth habit. The foliage is a glossy green. The red flowers are produced along the stem during February and March.

3' tall x 4' wide

Zone 7-9

'Vintage Jade' is recommended for small foundation plantings, borders, walkways, or as a ground cover on banks



Coppertone™ has new bronze reddish-purple foliage in the spring.

Photo courtesy of Bailey Nursery, Newport, MN and Dr. Michael Dirr, Watkinsville, GA

2. *Distylium Coppertone™ ('PIIDIST-III' PP25,304, First Editions®)* has a mid-sized to rounded growth habit with coppery red new foliage that matures to blue-green.

It also has small red flowers in February and March.

3-4' tall and 4-5' wide

Zones 7-9

Coppertone™ is recommended for low-growing hedges, foundation plantings, and accents



This is the mature height and width of Blue Cascade®. Photo courtesy of Bailey Nursery, Newport, MN and Dr. Michael Dirr, Watkinsville GA.

3. *Distylium Blue Cascade® ('PIIDIST-II' PP24,409)* has a compact, spreading habit with dark blue-green foliage that holds its color year round. The new foliage is a bronze-reddish purple in the spring. It also has red blooms in February and March.

4' tall x 4' wide

Zones 7-9

Blue Cascade® is recommended for low-growing hedges, foundation plantings and accents.



Emerald Heights® is an excellent replacement for Otto Luyken Laurel in the landscape.

Photo courtesy of Dr. Michael Dirr, Watkinsville, GA

4. Distylium Emerald Heights® ('PIIDIST-I' PPAF) has dark green foliage. It also has the same flowering characteristics in February and March as the other Distylium hybrids. 6' tall and 6' wide

Zones 7-9

Emerald Heights® is recommended for privacy hedges, borders, and specimens in foundation plantings.

5. Distylium Linebacker™ ('PIIDIST-IV' PPAF, First Editions®) is the tallest variety of the hybrids with a compact but upright growth habit. The reddish new foliage matures to a dark green. It will also have small red flowers in February and March. 8' to 10' tall x 6'x 8' wide

Zones 7-9

Linebacker™ is recommended for hedges, foundation plantings, and upright growing accents.



Linebacker™ is the tallest variety of Distylium.
Photo courtesy of Bailey Nursery, Newport, MN.

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